



CONGRESSMAN
JOE SCARBOROUGH
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NEWS RELEASE

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOE SCARBOROUGH ON THE
MERCHANT MARINE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR H.R. 3616, THE
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999**

April 29, 1998

My opening statement will be brief so that we may proceed directly with consideration of the panel's recommendations. I know that my colleagues join with me in wishing Chairman Herb Bateman a speedy recovery so that he may resume his leadership role both on this panel and the readiness subcommittee. My understanding is that the prognosis is for a complete recovery and that Chairman Bateman is looking forward to being pronounced "fit for full duty" sometime early in May.

The Chairman's mark before you for consideration consists of two parts. The first part consists of the proposed panel recommendations for the Panama Canal Commission, including the annual authorization for expenditures and transition related provisions. This first part, if adopted today and at the full committee markup next week, will be included as title thirty five in H.R. 3616, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 1999. The second part of the Chairman's mark includes the annual authorization for the U.S. Maritime Administration and administrative provisions, primarily for the sale of obsolete vessels of the reserve fleet. This part, again if adopted at the full committee markup next week, will be included at title thirty six in the Defense Authorization Act. Before I recognize Congressman Underwood, I want to express my thanks to the members of the panel for their hard work and also their staffs.

As you may be aware, the National Security Committee shares jurisdiction over a number of provisions relating to the Panama Canal Commission with the Civil Service Subcommittee of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee. Our respective staffs have worked closely together to ensure that the panel's recommendations will not result in a sequential referral of the bill to that committee. I wish to thank Chairman Mica for his cooperation and support in this effort, and to his staff, George Nesterchuk, Gary Ewing, and Charli Coon for their hard work. My thanks also go out to the staff of the Panama Canal Commission for their assistance in the development of today's package.